

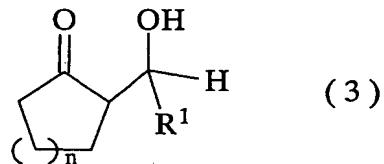
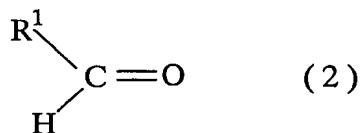
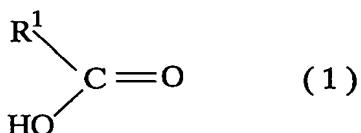
IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-3. (canceled)

Claim 4. (currently amended) ~~The process according to claim 3~~

A process for producing a 2-(1-hydroxyalkyl)cycloalkanone and/or a 2-(1-hydroxyaryl)cycloalkanone represented by formula (3), which comprises the steps of subjecting a cycloalkanone, and an aldehyde represented by formula (2) comprising a carboxylic acid represented by formula (1), to aldol condensation in the presence of water and a basic catalyst, wherein the molar amount of the basic catalyst A added is not less than the molar amount of the carboxylic acid (1) represented by the formula (1) B and the difference between A and B is 0.06 mol or less per mol of the aldehyde (2)



wherein n is an integer of 1 or 2, and R¹ represents a hydrogen atom or a C1 to C8 linear or branched alkyl group or a substituted or unsubstituted aryl group
wherein an aqueous layer obtained after the aldol condensation reaction is used again,
wherein an aqueous layer recovered through pH adjustment with an acid and separation of the
layer after the aldol condensation reaction is used again.

Claim 5. (previously presented) The process according to claim 4, wherein the basic catalyst is added in such an amount as to neutralize or alkalize (to pH 7 or more) the aqueous layer before the aqueous layer is used again.

Claims 6-7. (canceled)

SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENT

Support for the amendment to claim 4 is found in claim 3 as currently presented. No new matter would be added to this application by entry of this amendment. No new issues would be raised before the examiner as applicants have merely rewritten a dependent claim in independent form. Entry of applicants' amendment and full consideration thereof at this stage of prosecution is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of this amendment, claims 4 and 5 will now be active in this application.

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

The claimed invention is directed to a process for producing 2-(1-hydroxy substituted) cycloalkanones as well as processes which use 2-(1-hydroxy substituted) cycloalkanones.

Applicants wish to thank examiner Solola for indicating that claims 4 and 5 are allowed. However, since claims 4 and 5 previously depended from independent claim 3, which is rejected, applicants have now amended dependent claim 4 to include all of the limitations of independent claim 3. The examiner is invited to pass claims 4 and 5 to issue.

The rejections of claims 1-3 and 6-7 are believed to be moot as these claims have been canceled without prejudice to their further prosecution.

Applicants note, that the official action indicates that applicants' claimed foreign priority is not granted because applicants have not filed a certified English translation of the priority document. Applicants enclose herewith an English language translation of JP 2002-378005. A certified copy of JP 2002-378005 was filed with the USPTO on December 16, 2003. Applicants respectfully request the full benefit of applicants' Japanese filing date of December 26, 2002.

Applicants submit that this application is now in condition for allowance and early notification of such action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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